Smoking and Infertility

Smoking is directly responsible for up to 13% of all infertility

In addition to the many health risks such as cancer and heart disease, smoking also directly affects fertility in both women and men. Before beginning fertility treatment we strongly advise you to give up smoking to significantly improve your chances of becoming pregnant (Practice Committee of the ASRM, 2008).

Effects of smoking on fertility in women:

- Smokers are 54% more likely to take 12 months or longer to become pregnant. (Practice Committee of the ASRM, 2008)
- Smoking can cause genetic abnormalities in developing eggs
- Smoking directly affects hormone production including oestrogen
- Menopause can occur 1 – 4 years earlier for smokers than non-smokers
- Smoking is responsible for increased risk of miscarriage within the first 12 weeks of pregnancy
- Smoking increases the risk of pregnancy complications, in particular pre-eclampsia and placental problems
- Smoking also causes a great health risk for babies. Babies born to smokers tend to have a lower birth weight than non-smokers. This can be as much as 200 – 250g lighter.

Effects of smoking on fertility in men:

- Smoking is linked with damage to the DNA of sperm and thus poor quality sperm
- Smoking has been associated with poor sperm movement (Homan, Davies & Norman, 2007)
- Men who smoke have a lower sperm count than non-smokers.

Remember: Passive smoking can be just as harmful to fertility so it is important that both partners give up smoking together!

Smoking and fertility treatment:

Not only does smoking affect natural fertility, there is a strong link between smoking and poor outcomes of fertility treatment (ESHRE, 2010).

Smokers may need to undergo nearly twice as many IVF cycles than non-smokers to achieve a pregnancy.
Where can I get help to quit smoking?

There is no denying that if you are trying to become pregnant it is **essential** to give up smoking. It will greatly improve your chances of becoming pregnant naturally and increase your success of fertility treatment. There is no better motivation than this to quit smoking!

**Although smoking causes some damage to fertility that cannot be undone. Stopping smoking can reduce some of the damage and improve fertility considerably.**

The best resource available for people in Ireland is the National Smokers Quitline which can be contacted by telephoning: 1850 201 203

Other useful websites which we highly recommend are:

- [www.quit.ie](http://www.quit.ie)
- [www.cancer.ie](http://www.cancer.ie)

References